



Farningham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Terms of Reference

1. Purpose.

- a) Farningham Parish Council is the qualifying body for the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Farningham.
- b) Farningham Parish Council has agreed to establish a separate project management arrangement to facilitate the delivery of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- c) The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is to project manage the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for Farningham that defines the planning policy priorities identified by the community, by taking into account all representations made during the plan-making process whilst having regard to all relevant existing plans and evidence.
- d) The main purpose of the Steering Group is to oversee the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Farningham, in order that the plan will progress to an Independent Examination, a successful community referendum and be adopted by Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) to become planning policy.
- e) The Steering Group will engage the local community to ensure that the Plan is truly representative of the ambitions of the residents of the Parish. The Steering Group will maximise support for the approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan by ensuring high levels of community engagement throughout the plan-making process. However, the Neighbourhood Plan must be consistent with National and District planning policies and SDCs Local Plan (once the Local Plan has been adopted) and, whilst some aspects to produce the plan may sometimes be out of our control, the Steering Group will consult with local residents as much as is feasible throughout the development of the plan.

2. Principles.

- a) The Steering Group will undertake the process in a democratic, transparent and fair fashion, encouraging widespread participation and giving equal consideration to opinions and ideas from all members of the community.
- b) All decisions made shall be fully evidenced and supported through consultation with the local community.

3. Roles and Responsibilities.

In order to achieve this, the Steering Group will carry out the following roles:

- a) Be accountable for direction and strategic management of the Neighbourhood Plan;



- b) Produce, monitor and update a project timetable in accordance with SDCs neighbourhood planning process that has been prepared in accordance with the Regulatory Stages of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and refers to The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- c) Produce a consultation and engagement strategy, showing how the public will be involved throughout the process;
- d) Report back to Farningham Parish Council for approval of decisions taken at the Steering Group meetings;
- e) Undertake analysis and evidence gathering to support the plan production process;
- f) Actively support and promote the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan throughout the duration of the project;
- g) Identify sources of funding;
- h) Liaise with relevant authorities and organisations to ensure the plan is acceptable to all relevant authorities.
- i) Gather data from a wide range of sources to ensure that the conclusions reached are fully evidenced and that the aspirations and issues of the residents are understood.
- j) In accordance with the law, only collect a limited amount of information about individuals that is deemed necessary for correspondence and information provision. The Steering Group will not use profiling and will not sell or pass data to third parties. The Steering Group will not use data for purposes other than those specified. The Steering Group will make sure data is stored securely and will delete all information deemed to be no longer necessary within six months after the Neighbourhood Plan receives final stage of approval.
- k) The Steering Group will use the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policy of Farningham Parish Council.
- l) Consult as widely and thoroughly as is possible to ensure that the draft and final Neighbourhood Plan is representative of the views of residents.
- m) Agree, subject to ratification by Farningham Parish Council, a final submission version of the Farningham Neighbourhood Plan;



4. Membership.

- a) The Steering Group will be made up of a cross-section of volunteers from the community, including Parish Councillors. Effort will be made to seek input from all sections of the community.
- b) Membership of the Steering Group will be open to the public and Parish Councillors indefinitely. New members who would like to be involved, can approach the Steering Group at any given time. The steering group will consider and, if appropriate for the project, approve new members.

5. Decision Making.

- a) The Steering Group has full delegated authority from Parish Council to deliver its plan making functions up to and including publication of the Consultation Draft Plan, subject to these Terms of Reference. The Steering Group will report to the Parish Council setting out progress on its work. The Parish Council's approval of the Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan is required prior to publication for consultation and independent examination.
- b) The plan-making process remains the responsibility of the Parish Council as the qualifying body. All publications, consultation and community engagement exercises will be undertaken by or on behalf of the Parish Council via the Steering Group, with appropriate recognition of the Parish Council's position given in all communications associated with the project.

6. Meetings.

- a) Steering Group meetings will be targeted to take place regularly as determined by the SG with certain exceptions such as Summer/Christmas holiday breaks.
- b) Where possible, meetings will be held at different places within the Parish. The dates of future meetings will be made publicly available via the Neighbourhood Plan website, relevant Facebook group page and notice board. If online sessions are necessary, 'attendees' are to clearly identify themselves. The Chair reserves the right to remove anyone who is not willing to do so.
- c) The Steering Group will elect a Chair, Treasurer and Secretary from its membership to remain in those positions until the project is completed. If these positions should become vacant, the Steering Group will elect an alternate representative.
- d) The Secretary shall keep a record of meetings and circulate to Steering Group members and Parish Council representatives in a timely fashion. The record of each meeting shall be made publicly available on the Neighbourhood Plan website.
- e) At least four clear days' notice of meetings shall be sent to members via email and include points for discussion at the meeting.



- f) Decisions made by the Steering Group will normally be by consensus at Steering Group meetings. Where a vote is required, each member shall have one vote. A minimum of 4 members shall be present where matters are presented for decisions to be taken. A simple majority vote will be required to support any motion. The Chairman shall have one casting vote.
- g) Meetings, where a key decision is required, are open to all residents of Farningham. All groups and interested parties will be encouraged to participate at such meetings. The points for discussion will include an item to receive any representations from members of the public. This item will last no longer than 15 minutes unless agreed by the Chairman, with a maximum of five minutes allowed per speaker. Only members of the Steering Group are permitted to vote.

7. Communication.

- a) The Steering Group will create and draft all publications for updating the Parish Council and local community. Once approved, these will be submitted for release to the relevant areas, to include Facebook groups, websites, notice boards, leaflets etc. to ensure all the community remains fully informed.
- b) At no point should any information be released without prior approval of the Steering Group to ensure information is accurate and appropriate.

8. Working Groups.

- a) The Steering Group may establish working groups, to aid them in any Neighbourhood Plan related work.
- b) Each working group should have a lead person from the Steering Group. The leader may allow additional volunteers from the community to further the work, subject to the agreement of the Steering Group.
- c) Members of the community will be encouraged to participate in the process at all stages.
- d) The work of these groups does not need to be open to the public and their meetings are not required to follow the procedures referenced in section 6 above.
- e) These groups may include, but are not limited to, Conservation and Heritage, Community Infrastructure, Housing, Transport, Work and Employment.

9. Finance.

- a) All grants and funding will be applied for and held by Farningham Parish Council, who will ring-fence the funds for Neighbourhood Plan work.



- b) The Steering Group will notify the Parish Council, advising them of any significant planned expenditure over £500 before it is incurred and requesting access to the funds if it is to be used from the budget or reserves.
- c) Steering Group members from any working group may claim back any previously agreed expenditure incurred during any Neighbourhood Plan related work.
- d) The Treasurer, the Clerk to Farningham Parish Council, will maintain a record of all income and expenditure for all Neighbourhood Plan work.

10. Conduct.

- a) It is expected that all Steering Group members will abide by the principles and practice of the Parish Councils Code of Conduct including conflicts of interest, particularly with regard to development.
- b) The Steering Group as a whole is accountable to the wider community for ensuring that the Neighbourhood Plan reflects their collective expectations.
- c) The Steering Group will achieve this through applying the following principles:
 - Be clear and open when their individual roles or interests are in conflict;
 - Treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religion and belief; and
 - Actively promote equality of access and opportunity.
- d) Membership of the Steering Group, and any additional working groups, is limited to residents of Farningham to ensure that all discussions and decisions reflect the views and interests of the local community. However, individuals from outside the parish may be invited to join at the discretion of the Chair, where their involvement is deemed beneficial to the group's objectives.

11. Changes to the Terms of Reference.

- a) This constitution may be amended with the support of at least (two-thirds) of the current membership at a Steering Group meeting and with the approval of Farningham Parish Council.

12. Dissolution.

- a) The Steering Group will be dissolved once its objectives have been attained and/or when at least two-thirds of its members and Farningham Parish Council, consider its services are no longer required.
- b) The Steering Group will then dispose of any remaining funds held in accordance with any conditions imposed by the grant funders and in the best interests of Farningham Parish Council.